



# Smog Check—Past and Present

MAY 1998

	PAST	PRESENT
<b>Gross Polluters</b>	The Gross Polluter category did not exist. Vehicles either passed or failed their Smog Check inspections. Owners of failing vehicles had to repair the vehicle unless eligible for a Repair Cost Waiver.	<p>Another category of failing vehicles has been established to identify the highest polluting vehicles for repair. These vehicles emit many more pollutants than are allowed for a particular model and much more than a typical failing vehicle. Though they represent only 10-15 percent of all California vehicles, Gross Polluters are responsible for at least 50 percent of California's vehicular smog.</p> <p>Gross Polluters must be retested at a Test-Only Station or Gross Polluter Certification Pilot Station to verify the repairs. Owners of Gross Polluters may obtain a Repair Cost Waiver, Economic Hardship Extension, or Repair Assistance.</p>
<b>Program Areas</b>	The state was divided into two areas. Vehicles were tested every two years in the state's more polluted regions, but vehicles were only tested upon sale of the vehicle in Change of Ownership Areas, the state's rural regions.	<p>The state is now divided into three regions: <b>Change of Ownership, Basic, and Enhanced</b>. These areas determine the type and frequency of Smog Check inspections to be performed on each vehicle. This is determined by the ZIP Code in which the vehicle is registered. Enhanced Areas are California's smoggiest urbanized areas, and currently do not meet federal ozone standards.</p> <p>Requirements in Change of Ownership Areas remain the same. In Basic and Enhanced Areas, vehicles are required to get a Smog Check inspection every two years and when the vehicle is sold. Vehicles registered in Enhanced Areas will be given a more comprehensive test. (See Emissions Testing Equipment below).</p>
<b>Smog Check Facilities</b>	The Smog Check inspection, any necessary repairs, and certification usually occurred all under one roof at approximately 8,000 licensed test-and-repair facilities in the state.	<p>In Change of Ownership and Basic Areas, all vehicles continue to be tested at any licensed Smog Check facility.</p> <p>In Enhanced Areas, 15 percent of vehicles—2 percent randomly selected and the 13 percent most likely to fail—will be directed to Test-Only Stations at the time of their biennial Smog Check inspection. All other vehicles in the Enhanced Areas may continue to have their vehicle emissions inspections performed at any licensed Smog Check facility.</p> <p>In all areas of the state, vehicles which fail as Gross Polluters or fail because of tampered emissions control systems must have repairs certified at a Test-Only Station or Gross Polluter Certification Pilot Station.</p> <p>Gold Shield stations are test-and-repair stations that perform to a higher standard of excellence, guaranteeing that repairs on Gross Polluters will be done right the first time or additional repairs will be made at no charge to the consumer.</p>
<b>Emissions Testing Equipment</b>	Since 1984, all Smog Check stations in California have used a Test Analyzer System (TAS) to conduct a two-speed idle test that identifies hydrocarbon (HC) and carbon monoxide (CO) levels only. The BAR-90 TAS replaced the BAR-84 TAS in 1990 and was used throughout California until 1998.	<p>The BAR-90 TAS is only used in the Basic and Change-of-Ownership Areas. The BAR-90 TAS uses a two-speed idle test to check for emissions of hydrocarbons (HC) and carbon monoxide (CO).</p> <p>In 1998, the BAR-97 Emissions Inspection System will replace the BAR-90 in the Enhanced Areas of the state. When fully implemented, no BAR-90 two-speed idle tests will be accepted by BAR in Enhanced Areas except in special cases. This new machine uses a dynamometer, a treadmill for vehicles, to test vehicles under real-world conditions. It checks for oxides of nitrogen (NOx) emissions in addition to HC and CO.</p>

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## SMOG CHECK PROGRAM FACT SHEET: SMOG CHECK—PAST AND PRESENT

(Continued)

	PAST	PRESENT
<b>Temporary Relief from Repair Costs</b>	<p>A <b>Repair Cost Waiver</b> was available for vehicle owners who could not afford necessary repairs. To obtain one, a vehicle owner did not have to spend money on emissions-related repairs if the repair <i>estimate</i> exceeded a sliding-scale Cost Limit of \$50 to \$300, depending on the age of the vehicle.</p> <p>The Waiver allowed the vehicle to be registered year after year without passing its Smog Check inspection. Repair Cost Waivers were obtained at a Referee Center.</p> <p>Vehicles being initially registered in the state or changing ownership were ineligible.</p>	<p>To obtain a Repair Cost Waiver, a vehicle owner must spend <i>at least</i> \$450 on emissions-related repairs. A sliding scale between \$90 and \$450 depending on the age of the vehicle may be used as the minimum amount that must be spent to obtain the waiver in some areas until late 1998. After that, \$450 must be spent in all areas of the state to obtain a Repair Cost Waiver.</p> <p>A Repair Cost Waiver still allows a vehicle to be registered without passing its Smog Check inspection. The Waiver is only valid for two years and is only available once during a motorist's ownership of a vehicle. (Motorists receiving a Waiver before January 1, 1998, may still qualify.)</p> <p><b>Economic Hardship Extension.</b> The Economic Hardship Extension gives a vehicle owner up to 2 years to repair a vehicle. However, it can be used only once by a vehicle owner during his or her ownership of that vehicle (a motorist receiving an Extension before January 1, 1998, may still qualify). Starting in 1998, it is only available to qualified low-income motorists who must produce an estimate stating that repairs exceed \$250.</p> <p>Vehicles with tampered emissions control systems, vehicles changing ownership, and vehicles being initially registered in the state are <i>not</i> eligible for a Repair Cost Waiver or an Economic Hardship Extension. To be eligible for either program, vehicles with tampered emissions control systems must have their emissions equipment replaced or reconnected.</p> <p>Repair Cost Waivers and Economic Hardship Extensions may be obtained at a Referee Center.</p> <p><b>Low Income Repair Assistance Program.</b> In addition, the state is developing a Repair Assistance Program which will assist low-income motorists with emissions-related repair costs. The motorists must make a \$250 co-payment and the state will provide up to \$450 to assist the motorist with any remaining repairs which must be made at a Gold Shield station.</p>
<b>Smog Check Certificates</b>	<p>A paper certificate was provided to the owner of a vehicle that passed its Smog Check. The owner mailed the certificate and the vehicle registration renewal to the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to complete the registration process.</p>	<p>The certificate is sent to the DMV via the Electronic Transmission system (ET) in the Smog Check machine at each Smog Check station. As a receipt, consumers receive a Vehicle Inspection Report (VIR) that provides the results from the Smog Check inspection. It includes information about the physical condition of the emissions control system and related parts, as well as tailpipe emissions levels. The vehicle registration renewal is matched with the electronic record of the Smog Check at the DMV to complete the registration process.</p>
<b>Exempted Vehicles</b>	<p>Certain vehicles were exempted from Smog Check, including: vehicles manufactured before 1966, vehicles with diesel engines, vehicles with two-cycle engines, vehicles with engines smaller than 50 cubic inches of displacement, electric vehicles, and motorcycles.</p>	<p>The following have been added to the list of vehicles exempt from Smog Check. Vehicles manufactured before 1974 are exempt from all aspects of the Smog Check program. In addition, vehicle model years 4 years old and newer (currently 1995-1998) are exempt from the biennial requirement of the Smog Check Program. However, these newer vehicles must still have a Smog Check performed when changing ownership or being initially registered in the state.</p>